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From the Editor

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From the Editor

Cover Page Footnote

This article is from an earlier iteration of *Diálogo* which had the subtitle "A Bilingual Journal." The publication is now titled "Diálogo: An Interdisciplinary Studies Journal."

FROM THE EDITOR



Elizabeth Coonrod Martínez

We are pleased to present the 2011 issue of *Diálogo*, masterfully prepared by Guest Editor and DePaul Sociology professor José Soltero, in anticipation of projections of the new Census report, and under the theme, “Latina/o and Latin American Poverty & Inequality,”

While articles in this issue address some of the trends and other current considerations on the status of US Latinos, many new and salient aspects are also gleaned through statistics and comparisons presented here, which have resulted from research collaborations undertaken in recent years. The expertise and writers in this issue represent a variety of disciplinary orientations, centers and universities.

Latinos in Chicago are as likely as the African-American population to represent the lowest strata in average annual income, but the interesting factor represented by these studies is that little change is evident in the four-decade period between 1970 and 2008: the only gain in real income since 1970 was experienced by European-origin populations.

While Latinos at times experience lower unemployment rates than African-Americans, these studies note how much higher unemployment rates are for Latinos than the majority European-origin populations.

More Latinos attain higher education levels and a wage earnings—if they have been present one or more generations (as the Census and these studies report)—they then relocate, according to the current trend, to the suburbs (from inner cities).

Meanwhile, the newer immigrant, and other Latinos with lowest educational attainment, who remain in high urban density areas like Chicago, are more likely to be employed than Latinos in the suburbs (but at much lower wages). Such data points the way for future study on whether it is possible for second and third generation Latinos to attain the elusive “American dream.” As they leave the inner city, and attain higher educational status, they appear to also fall into groups of higher unemployment. Upon a continuing economic downturn, would they have to return to the inner city for work?

Another interesting aspect to the data presented is Latino civic engagement. Throughout the nation, Latinos turned out in record numbers to vote in recent elections. In the specific example of the mostly Mexican-heritage Chicago Pilsen district, more than half the respondents (nearly all of those had registered to vote) stated they had voted in recent years, and 84 percent of that community had cast a vote in the 2008 presidential elections.

These studies show that the higher the educational attainment, the more likely Latinos are to live in the suburbs, but also to be unemployed. Those who continue to reside in such inner-city neighborhoods as Pilsen, on the other hand, are especially active in civic engagement.

The protest marches of 2006 and 2008 in Chicago brought the participation of all age groups, especially those under 30. The significant revelation in this data is that of the 45-55 age group’s turnout and the fact they were the most politically engaged. This offers the tantalizing reflection that in the near future, the near- and after retirement-age Latino population may exert as much influence

as those of European-origin in that age group currently do. While the civil rights protest movement of earlier decades made possible the recognition of the "US Latino," a group now "seniors" in this generation, current activities show that the children of immigrants (who grew up in the US) as well as newer arrivals are no longer content to remain invisible. The data presented here can invite a whole range of new studies.

A segment that continues to remain invisible is that of the "day laborer," whose part-time, temporary contribution goes unmeasured. The article in this issue on that growing segment, with a specific regional example, assesses market trends and the pressures and experiences of the day laborer. As well, the significance of such regional centers to protect and advocate for the laborer. Their wages -one-time, temporary salaries- have to stretch over long periods of time when work is not available (and often needs to be sent home for greater needs). The ambiguous "day laborer" term itself needs to be translated and focused in the greater community, as they are at best only considered in the context of jokes on talk shows. They reside in over-crowded and less than standard housing, barely surviving to fulfill their "dreams" (i.e., basic needs), and yet their contribution to US society is substantial.

The creative portion of this issue offers two interesting perspectives, the first an assessment of stories by a Cuban writer, revealing a tender portrait of life and outlook among personages of African and Caribbean-Hispanic heritage. The final item a story both in preparation and experience of a journey toward new hope, both physically and emotionally.

Next year *Diálogo* 2012 will attain the milestone of its 15th anniversary, we are planning a slightly new appearance and projection of this publication, and renewing the Book Review and Interview sections. We encourage junior faculty and others to contribute or propose items for these sections, and continue to welcome creative items, on and about the Latino world. Our theme for next year's issue: "When you can't go back: Dislocation and Exile." Dangers arisen for residents in Central American countries and Mexico (due to drug cartels and gang activity) seriously imperil the lives of many, who then risk lives to come across the US border. These and other perspectives and experiences of dislocation, from a variety of Latin American/Caribbean nations are invited for that special issue. We look forward to new ideas and contributions in the coming years, and encourage submissions that help bring the community, past and present —across all physical and imaginary borders— to the forefront of our continuing dialogues.

¡Qué disfruten de este número, y hasta el próximo encuentro!

Elizabeth Coonrod Martínez

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